

## Claims

We claim:

1. A method of managing a firmware development process, comprising:
  - 5 archiving a firmware file containing at least one of firmware source code and firmware object code in an archive; and assigning a status to the firmware file corresponding to a stage in the development process, wherein the status is also stored in the archive.
- 10 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising storing a work history of the firmware file in the archive.
- 15 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the status is one selected from a private status, a test status, and a public status.
- 20 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the private status corresponds to a design stage in the development process, the test status corresponds to a reviewing stage, and the public status corresponds to a manufacturing stage.
- 25 5. The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the private status and the test status restricts access to the firmware file to at least one authorized user.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the firmware file contains source code and object code, and wherein the method further comprises compressing the source code and object code before the archiving step.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning a part number to the firmware file.
- 30 8. The method of claim 1, further comprising saving edits to the firmware file.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising retrieving at least a portion of the firmware file from the archive.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the retrieving step comprises:  
5 selecting whether to retrieve the object code or both the object code and the source code; and  
retrieving based on the selecting step.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the selecting step further comprises  
10 restricting retrieval of the source code to at least one authorized user.

12. A method of managing a firmware development process, comprising:

saving a firmware source code and a firmware object code in a firmware file;

archiving the firmware file in an archive;

saving edits to the firmware file; and

5 assigning a status selected from a private status, a test status, and a public status to the firmware file,

wherein the status is also stored in the archive, wherein the private status corresponds to a design stage in the development process, the test status corresponds to a reviewing stage, and the public status corresponds to a manufacturing stage, and wherein the private status and  
10 the test status restrict access to the firmware file to at least one authorized user.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising storing a work history of the firmware file in the archive.

15 14. The method of claim 12, further comprising compressing the source code and object code before the archiving step.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising assigning a part number to the firmware file.

20

16. The method of claim 12, further comprising, retrieving at least a portion of the firmware file from the archive.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the retrieving step comprises:

25 selecting whether to retrieve the object code or both the object code and the source code; and

retrieving based on the selecting step, restricting retrieval of the source code to at least one authorized user.

30

18. A firmware management system, comprising:
    - a firmware management tool;
    - a memory that stores a plurality of firmware files and that is accessible by the firmware management tool; and
- 5           a user interface for accessing the firmware management tool.